Cold Call VS Other Question Types

Research indicates that effective questioning is a critical teaching skill that drives student **thinking, engagement, and comprehension.** One key aspect of questioning is **how teachers elicit responses.**

Sibme's **Cold Call vs. Other Question Types AI Report** categorizes teacher questions based on the response strategy used, identifying four key types.

Cold Call

The teacher calls on a student by name who has not volunteered.

- Ensures **broad participation and accountability.**
- **Checks for understanding** across the class.
- Keeps students **engaged and attentive.**
- Most effective when used in an intentional and positive manner.

"What is one reason the American Revolution started? [Pauses, then selects a student by name who hasn't volunteered]."

Volunteer Question

The teacher allows students to raise their hands and volunteer to respond.

- Encourages **participation by choice.**
- Gives students **time to process and formulate responses.**
- Allows for **organic discussions.**

The teacher allows students to raise their hands and volunteer to respond.

Rhetorical Question

The teacher asks a question but does not expect a student answer.

- **Guides thinking** and **builds curiosity.**
- Emphasizes **key ideas.**
- **Transitions smoothly** into key points.

The teacher asks a question but does not expect a student answer.

Choral Response

The teacher prompts all students to respond together.

- Reinforces **key facts, vocabulary, or procedures.**
- Boosts **confidence and creates safety** for students that may be shy, reluctant, have learning challenges or are learning English.

The teacher prompts all students to respond together.

Unspecified

Any question/response strategy that does not fall into the above categories (e.g., partner talk, turn-and-talk: is labeled 'Unspecified'. "Turn to your partner and discuss one way this story connects to real life. I'll call on a few pairs to share in a moment."

The purpose of this document is to support basic understanding and reflection related to the corresponding report.

Choosing the Right Strategy

The type of question and response strategy used influences not only the l**evel of engagement** but also the **level of thinking** required. Understanding and intentionally using a variety of these strategies can help create a **more engaging, equitable, and thought-provoking classroom environment.**

The best response strategy depends on your **learning objective, student engagement needs, and how much processing time students require.**

Cold Call
- You need longer, individual responses that vary by student.
- You want to promote higher-order thinking and deeper understanding.
- You want to ensure all students engage, not just volunteers.

Volunteer Question
- You want longer, varied responses based on student choice.
- You want to encourage higher-order thinking while giving students time to process.
- You are facilitating discussion and idea-sharing.

Rhetorical Question
- Introducing new concepts or emphasizing key ideas.
- Encouraging critical thinking without requiring responses.
- Preparing students for discussion or inquiry-based learning.

Choral Response
- The response requires short, identical answers (e.g., facts, vocabulary, or formulas).
- You want to reinforce rote recall and procedural fluency.
- You want to build confidence and participation in low-stakes moments.

Additional strategies, which would fall under the Unspecified category, are also valuable for supporting **collaboration and deeper engagement** and great for **quick, efficient formative assessment.** These include but are not limited to think-pair-share, turn-and-talk, exit tickets, whiteboards or hand-signals, and polling/response clickers.

Using a **mix of response strategies** throughout a lesson helps ensure all students have meaningful opportunities to engage, process, and participate!

When reviewing the Cold Call vs. Other Response Strategies report, teachers can consider:

1. Did the lesson rely too heavily on one response type, and how did that impact student engagement?

2. Were all students equally involved, or did certain students dominate participation?

3. Did the questioning strategies support deeper thinking and comprehension?

4. Did the response types align with the lesson goals (e.g., choral for recall, cold call for accountability, volunteer for discussion)?

5. Would your cold call or choral response strategy benefit from the use of a procedure to better structure responses?

   a. Sample Cold Call Procedure: Teacher asks Question > Provides Wait time > Calls on Individual > Provides Wait time > Teacher Responds with Feedback

   b. Sample Choral Response Procedure: Teacher asks Question > Raises Hands to indicate silence and provides Wait time > Teacher Lowers hands and says, "everyone" > All Students respond > Teacher Responds with Feedback

6. How can the balance of questioning strategies be adjusted in future lessons to better engage all students?

Also consider:

- Was sufficient wait time provided to allow students to think before responding?(Refer to the Wait Time 1&2 Report)

By analyzing how students respond, teachers can refine their questioning techniques to enhance engagement, **equity, and deeper learning.**

**FIND ADDITIONAL
AI COMPANION RESOURCES**